Accountability Report

2015–2016

Education and Early Childhood Development

NOVA SCOTIA

Contents

Accountability Statement 4

Message from the Minister 5

Introduction and Structure 7

Student Assessments as Performance Measures 7

Financial Results 8

Measuring Our Performance 9

Nova Scotia Assessments: Reading and Writing 9

Nova Scotia Assessments: Mathematics 12

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 14

Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP) 16

Early Childhood Development Intervention Services Waitlists 17

Child Care Subsidies 18

Early Development Instrument (EDI) 20

High School Graduation Rate 22

Appendix 1—Disclosures of Wrongdoing 23

Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development for the year ended March 31, 2016 is prepared pursuant to the Finance Act and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Statement of Mandate for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of department outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments and opinions by department management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development management. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the 2015–16 Statement of Mandate.

Original signed by

Hon. Karen Casey
Minister

Original signed by

Sandra McKenzie
Deputy Minister

Message from the Minister

It is my pleasure to present the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's sixteenth accountability report. This document reports on the department's activities as outlined in its 2015–16 Statement of Mandate.

In January 2015, the department released *Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education* in response to the first comprehensive review of Nova Scotia's education system in 25 years. Work started immediately and in the past year we have identified, and began implementation of, over 100 actions to modernize our education system.

We know that investing in early childhood education now will provide a direct, immediate benefit for Nova Scotia children. In 2015-16 the department completed the first in-depth review of regulated child care ever undertaken in the province, and the department accepted all 18 recommendations to make child care more affordable for families and improve wages for early childhood educators. In 2016-17 we will move forward to begin implementing these recommendations.

The department also opened four new Early Years centres in 2015-16 bringing the total to eight, one in each school board in the province, increasing access to services and supports for young children and their families. *Let's Play Together: A Guide for Parents of 4-Year Olds*, was released, designed to help families support their children's early development through play.

Improving student achievement in math and literacy remains a priority for the department. Led by classroom teachers, a more streamlined curriculum for grades primary to 3 was developed and implemented in 2015-16. This work continues with a renewed curriculum for grades 4 to 6 that will be implemented in September 2016. These revisions provide an opportunity for students to be introduced to coding as part of the updated Information and Communication Technology curriculum. Provincial homework standards were also put in place to support and enhance student learning at all grade levels.

To improve the learning environment in every classroom and ensure the safety and respect for everyone in our schools, in 2015-16 the department implemented a new Provincial Student Code of Conduct Policy. This policy provides clear and concise standards to support positive student behaviour.

The department has also continued initiatives that promote a positive learning environment, with additional funding provided to school boards to maintain the class size cap of 20 students for grades primary to 2, and to implement a cap of 25 students for grades 3 and 4. As well, each school continued to receive the Student Support Grant to provide additional financial support to improve student success and help relieve fundraising pressures for parents. Some examples of how these funds were used include covering the cost of entry fees and bus costs for a class trip,

buying new uniforms for sports teams, and buying school supplies for students who needed them.

In 2015-16, a greater emphasis was placed on helping students to be career ready and succeed in life after graduation. The Options and Opportunities (O_2) program was expanded and is now offered in 69 high schools for more than 2,600 students across the province, providing more students with opportunities to explore different careers. With the addition of four new sites, SchoolsPlus is now available to more than 200 schools to help prepare students for personal and academic success. This includes an increase in the number of mental health clinicians available to support students throughout the province.

The department also established a Transition Task Force to identify the challenges students face as they move from high school to post-secondary education, training or the workforce. The recommendations from the Task Force will provide direction to government, our education partners, and business on how to support successful student transitions.

The success of all of these initiatives will not be possible without the continued dedication and professionalism that is demonstrated by our province's teachers every day. We are continuing to work with teachers, school boards, and universities to develop for the first time, teaching standards to promote consistent high-quality teaching in classrooms across the province.

There has been a lot of progress made in year one of the Action Plan and we are looking forward to building on these accomplishments so that Nova Scotia students and teachers will continue to see positive changes as part of government's commitment to refocus, rebuild, and renew our education system.

Introduction and Structure

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2015-16 Accountability Report provides information on performance measures and finances identified in the 2015-16 Statement of Mandate.

Student Assessments as Performance Measures[1]

Performance measures for student assessments are reported as the percentage of students meeting expectations in reading, writing, and mathematics. For this report, "meeting expectations" refers to students performing at, or above, level 3 on a particular assessment.

Ongoing improvements to student assessment and evaluation are a priority for the department. In the first year of *Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education*, the department took action to improve student achievement in literacy and math, and enhance current assessment practices.

Following implementation of the Action Plan a decision was made to reset the baseline year for provincial assessments to 2015-16, to enable measurement against initiatives implemented through the plan. It will take time to see the effects of the changes the department is putting in place. It is anticipated that assessments in 2020 will show measurable success with students performing at or above expectations as measured by the provincial assessments.

To improve student performance in provincial, national and international assessments, teachers need access to programs, professional development, and continuing service education that will have a direct impact on improving student achievement. The department is working with teachers, school boards, and universities on the development of new teaching standards in Nova Scotia, with teacher education and professional development based on these standards.

[1] The reporting years stated for all assessment results presented in this report refer to the academic year (September to June), rather than the fiscal year.

Financial Results

Education and Early Childhood Development		
	2015-16 Estimate	**2015-16 Actual**
Program and Service Area:	($ thousands)	($ thousands)
Senior Management	$2,169	$2,811
Strategic Policy and Research	$2,012	$1,424
Early Years	$58,788	$57,370
Centre for Learning Excellence	$4,261	$4,012
Education Innovation Programs and Services	$17,797	$16,093
Student Equity and Support Services	$10,231	$9,038
French Programs and Services	$10,491	$11,559
Finance and Operations/Corporate Services	$10,617	$8,570
Public Education Funding	$979,809	$979,159
Learning Resources Credit Allocation	$6,813	$6,951
Teachers' Pension	$69,428	$72,014
School Capital Amortization	$72,191	$72,208
Total Department of Education and Early Childhood Development	**$1,244,607**	**$1,241,209**

Additional Information:		
Fees and Other Charges	$2,161	$3,426
Ordinary Recoveries	$13,100	$15,418
TCA Purchase Requirements	**$87,900**	**$75,566**
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	**211.8**	**184.9**

Measuring Our Performance

Nova Scotia Assessments: Reading and Writing

One of the department's core business areas is grades primary to 12 education. The percentage of grades 3, 6, and 8 students meeting provincial expectations in reading and/or writing is measured for a desired outcome of increased student learning and achievement in literacy.

What does this measure tell us?

These assessments measure students' reading and writing ability in grades 3, 6, and 8. The assessments are administered in the fall for grades 3 and 6, and in the spring for grade 8. Results from these assessments are used to make broader decisions relating to curriculum, programming, and intervention strategies. Teachers and parents are provided with individual student reports that can be used to inform programming for students.

Students in the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP) participate in the English-language Nova Scotia Assessment in Reading and Writing in grades 6 and 8. French-language provincial assessments in reading and writing are administered to students in grades 3, 6, and 8 who attend schools in the CSAP.

Reporting on 2015–16

Results for the English-language Nova Scotia Assessment in Reading and Writing in grades 3 and 6 have been in decline since 2012–13. This is not acceptable and initiatives from the Action Plan are being implemented to improve student achievement in literacy.

In 2015-16, there was no change in the results compared to the previous year and the goal is to increase the percentage of students meeting expectations each year. Results for the Évaluation de la Nouvelle-Écosse: lecture/écriture (French-language assessment in reading/writing) are similar to the trends seen in the English-language provincial assessment, with the exception of an increase of at least 4 per cent in all writing ability areas at grade 6.

Percentage of Students Meeting Reading Expectations								
	Nova Scotia Assessment: Reading[2]				L'Évaluation de la Nouvelle-Écosse (CSAP) : lecture*			
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Grade 3	76%	70%	68%	67%	---	---	75%	70%
Grade 6	76%	75%	74%	73%	76%	74%	69%	72%
Grade 8	70%	74%	73%	N/A**	71%	76%	71%	N/A**

* Trends for the Évaluation de la Nouvelle-Écosse: lecture at grade 3 cannot be reported as there are only two years of data.

** results not yet available; administered spring 2016

--- data not collected during this time frame

[2] Grade 3 students in the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP) do not participate in the English-language Nova Scotia Assessment in Reading.

	Percentage of Students Meeting Writing Expectations							
	Nova Scotia Assessment: Writing				L'Évaluation de la Nouvelle-Écosse (CSAP): écriture			
	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16
Grade 3								
Ideas	88%	88%	76%	73%	—	—	65%	67%
Organization	80%	76%	60%	59%	—	—	59%	58%
Language Use	83%	79%	64%	63%	—	—	58%	59%
Conventions	71%	66%	53%	51%	—	—	48%	51%
Grade 6								
Ideas	89%	88%	76%	78%	88%	79%	71%	75%
Organization	81%	79%	61%	62%	64%	64%	59%	67%
Language Use	82%	79%	66%	67%	57%	59%	56%	61%
Conventions	73%	65%	58%	61%	37%	50%	43%	47%
Grade 8				N/A**				N/A**
Ideas	95%	86%	—		86%	77%	—	
Organization	88%	78%	—		76%	71%	—	
Language Use	89%	82%	—		68%	69%	—	
Conventions	80%	72%	—		50%	60%	—	

** results not yet available; administered spring 2016

-- data not collected during this time frame

The Department is making changes now in the way literacy is taught and focused, including a new, streamlined primary to 3 curriculum introduced in September 2015. Efforts are being made to improve assessment practices in the classroom in order to support student achievement.

For example, an Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement was administered to grade 1 students in September 2015, which provides information to teachers to support their instruction of all students, and allows for earlier identification and interventions for students requiring extra support. The survey is then repeated in June to allow teachers to evaluate student progress.

It will take time to see the effects of the changes being made. It is anticipated that provincial assessments in 2020 will show measurable success with students performing at or above expectations in reading and writing. Therefore, going forward the target goal for reading will be an increase of 8 per cent by 2020 in the percentage of students who perform at or above expectations on these assessments.

Where do we want to go/be in the future?

Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education emphasizes the importance of building a strong foundation in literacy, including reading, to support the success of Nova Scotian students. It outlines a number of actions that will be undertaken to ensure students have the skills and knowledge they need to be successful as they move through the school system. This is

accomplished by providing more time to teach literacy and mathematics, as well as enhanced assessment and intervention practices.

The department continues to work closely with teachers to create a new model of curriculum design that is more streamlined, coordinated, and innovative, and the revised grades 4 to 6 curriculum will be implemented in September 2016.

On May 20, 2016 the department released the province's first primary to grade 12 Provincial Literacy Strategy, which will increase the focus on teaching reading and writing, and on developing oral communication skills. There will be consistent monitoring of specific measures through a Literacy Steering Committee and a Literacy Working Group. This will include reviewing results from Reading Recovery, early literacy instruction, mentors, and achievement data; and will inform provincial intervention, support, and implementation strategies.

Nova Scotia Assessments: Mathematics

One of the department's core business areas is grades primary to 12 education. The percentage of grades 4, 6, and 8 students meeting provincial expectations in the area of mathematics is one of the measures for a desired outcome of increased student learning and achievement in mathematics.

What does this measure tell us?

These assessments measure the mathematics ability of students in grades 4, 6, and 8. The assessments are administered in the fall for grades 4 and 6, and in the spring for grade 8. Results from these assessments are used to make broader decisions relating to curriculum, programming, and intervention strategies. Teachers and parents are provided with individual student reports that can be used to inform programming for students.

Students in the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP) do not participate in the English-language Nova Scotia Assessment in Mathematics. Students in grades 4, 6, and 8 who attend schools in the CSAP do participate in the Évaluation de la Nouvelle-Écosse: mathématiques.

Reporting on 2015–16

Similar to results for assessments in reading and writing, the percentage of students meeting expectations in mathematics has been declining. The assessment results for both the Nova Scotia Assessment in Mathematics and the Évaluation de la Nouvelle-Écosse: mathématiques show that three-fourths of elementary students are developing a foundation in mathematics, but as they progress in school, more students are struggling.

Percentage of Students Meeting Math Expectations								
	Nova Scotia Assessment: Mathematics				L'Évaluation de la Nouvelle-Écosse (CSAP): mathématiques			
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Grade 4	N/A**	74%	74%	76%	---	75%	73%	81%
Grade 6	73%	73%	69%	68%	---	73%	65%	72%
Grade 8	54%	57%	55%	N/A**	65%	67%	53%	N/A**

** results not yet available; administered spring 2016

--- data not collected during this time frame

Overall in 2015-16, the decline in results has not continued, and there has been a significant improvements in results for L'Évaluation de la Nouvelle-Écosse: mathématiques at grades 4 and 6, which saw an 8 per cent and 7 per cent increase, respectively, over the previous year.

Implementation of a new provincial mathematics curriculum for grades primary to 3, and for grade 10 began in September 2013[3]. It continued for grades 4 to 6, and grade 11 in 2014–15; and in the final year of implementation in 2015–16 with grades 7 to 9, and grade 12. This curriculum reflects research on how students best learn mathematics and focuses on the most important things to learn at each grade level.

Where do we want to go/be in the future?

Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education has placed a strong focus on building the foundations of math and literacy for grades primary to 3, ensuring the supports are in place to address the full range of students' learning strengths and needs.

Implementation of the new curriculum and the introduction of a common math assessment in grade 2 will help to ensure that our students are building the strong foundation in math they need to be successful in school and in their careers. Actions outlined in the Action Plan for the upcoming school year include targeted funding to school boards for math mentors and Early Intervention Support in math for students in grades primary to 3.

The department is currently revising the provincial Mathematics Strategy. Similar to literacy, it is anticipated that the initiatives implemented now will require time to show measurable success. The long-term target will be established through the updated strategy.

[3] *Nova Scotia Assessment: Mathematics in Grade 4* consists of questions that are common to the previous and current program in order to ensure that results are comparable across years.

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

One of the department's core business areas is grades primary to 12 education. The results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) are used to measure 15-year-old students' performance in reading, mathematics, and science and to allow for comparison across jurisdictions. The PISA assessment is one of the measures for a desired outcome of increased student learning and achievement in literacy and mathematics.

What does this measure tell us?

PISA is a well-respected international instrument sponsored by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Every three years it provides reliable measures of the performance of 15-year-old students' in reading, mathematics, and science and allows us to compare the performance of students in Nova Scotia with the students in other jurisdictions. Each assessment includes questions from all three subject areas with a focus on one subject area each time the assessment is administered. The major focus of the 2012 PISA assessment was mathematics and the focus for PISA 2015 was science.

Over 60 countries participated in PISA. Results from the 2012 PISA assessment were released in December 2013. The first PISA was administered in the spring of 2000; and Canada has participated in PISA since its inception.

Reporting on 2015–16

The 2012 PISA results are the most current data available, with the PISA 2015 results anticipated for release in December 2016. The 2012 PISA results indicate that statistically, in comparison to 2009, the average performance of students in Nova Scotia did not change by a significant amount in the areas of reading and science; but were significantly lower for mathematics.

PISA Results				
Year	**2009**	**2012**		
Subject	**NS Average**	**NS Average**	**Canadian Average**	**OECD Average**
Reading	516	508	523	496
Math	512	497	518	494
Science	523	516	525	501

Compared to the OECD average, Nova Scotia is performing on par in mathematics, and at a higher level for reading and science. However, Nova Scotian students continue to perform below the Canadian average by a significant margin in all three areas.

Where do we want to go/be in the future?

Nova Scotian students will continue to participate in the PISA assessment.

To support student assessment, evaluation, and reporting, the department will refocus on "assessment for learning" in all subjects, integrate student assessment into all revised curricula, and provide ongoing professional development to teachers and administrators in the use of assessment for student programming and intervention.

Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education has prioritized streamlining the curriculum to ensure students have the skills and knowledge they need to be successful as they move on to higher grades. The province has placed a strong focus on building the foundations of math and literacy in the early grades, which will lead to greater student success in the later grades.

Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP)

One of the department's core business areas is grade primary to 12 education. The Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP) results are used to measure student performance in reading, mathematics, and science in grade 8. The PCAP assessment is one of the measures for a desired outcome of increased student learning and achievement in literacy and mathematics.

What does this measure tell us?

PCAP is an assessment instrument developed by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). It is administered every three years and provides reliable measures of student performance in reading, mathematics, and science. The target population is students in grade 8. The average score for Canada is 500.

Reporting on 2015–16

Based on the 2013 results, Nova Scotia has seen an improvement over the 2010 assessment in the areas of math and science, however it continues to perform below the Canadian average in all three subject areas. PCAP 2016 was administered in Nova Scotia between April 25 and May 20, 2016, to assess reading as the primary domain, with math and science as secondary domains. A new target has been established using PCAP 2010 as the baseline due to changes in the target population from 2007. However, the 2016 results are not yet available.

PCAP Results						
	Adjusted 2007 Results[4]		2010 Results*		2013 Results	
Subject	NS Average	Canadian Average	NS Average	Canadian Average	NS Average	Canadian Average
Reading	483	500	489	500	488	508
Math	N/A	N/A	474	500	488	507
Science	N/A	N/A	489	500	492	500

*adjusted baseline

Where do we want to go/be in the future?

Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education has prioritized streamlining the curriculum to ensure students have the skills and knowledge they need to be successful as they move on to higher grades. The department is also emphasizing more hands-on learning activities for students and more exposure to the basics of coding, technology, and design.

[4] When first administered in 2007 the target population for the assessment was "13-year-old students." The target population was changed to "students in grade 8" in preparation for the second administration of the assessment in 2010. Results from 2007 were adjusted to account for this change in the assessment population and therefore results cannot be compared between 2007 and 2010 in the areas of mathematics and science.

Early Childhood Development Intervention Services Waitlists

Early Childhood Development Intervention Services delivers programs for young children diagnosed with, or at risk for, developmental delay. The programs are designed to help both the child and the family from the time the child is born to when they enter school.

What does this measure tell us?

Using caseload and wait-list data from Early Childhood Development Intervention Services programs the department can monitor and report on the number of children waiting for services.

Reporting on 2015–16

Leading up to 2015–16, more than 300 families were on waiting lists for intervention programs and as a result, a new governance structure was established in October 2015. This structure has enabled Early Childhood Development Intervention Services to reach all families on the waitlist that were identified in spring 2015. These families now have access to and are benefitting from the services.

Number of children on waitlists		
2013–14	**2014–15**	**2015–16**
336	332	No waitlist

The target for this measure is to maintain the waitlist at zero, with new families who are seeking services being seen within one month of referral.

Where do we want to go/be in the future?

In 2013, parents of pre-school children with special needs were facing waitlists for early intervention services, and a commitment was made to increase support for these programs.

A review of Early Childhood Development Intervention programs explored the issues these parents were facing and identified improvements. In 2015-16 the department prioritized the implementation of the review's recommendations and increased the number of early interventionists in the province to eliminate the waitlists.

Child Care Subsidies

Quality child care offers an ongoing opportunity for children's learning while providing safe and reliable care that promotes socialization, health, and a child's well-being. The availability of child care is an important factor in enabling parents to enter and remain in the work force, or to access employment training. Affordable child care is a critical resource to low and moderate income families.

What does this measure tell us?

The percentage of average daily subsidized child care spaces used, out of a total of available spaces. This performance measure allows the department to monitor usage rates, in order to ensure that access to subsidy is maximized for eligible families requiring support with their child care costs.

Reporting on 2015–16

In 2015-16, there was a significant drop (14.7 per cent) in the percentage of average daily subsidized child care spaces being used. The gap between the cost of care and the subsidy is too high. Often families are approved for subsidy but are still unable to afford the cost of care.

Percentage of average daily subsidized child care spaces used		
2013–14	2014–15	2015–16
97.7%	94.1%	79.4%

In 2015-16, the department completed the first in-depth review of regulated child care ever undertaken in the province, which resulted in 18 recommendations to make child care more affordable for families while improving wages for early childhood educators.

The department accepted all of the recommendations from the review and released a report containing 27 actions that will take place over the next five years. One of the five key priorities identified during the review was child care subsidies, and the department is implementing the following actions to reduce the gap between existing parent subsidy and cost of care:

1. increase the parent subsidy
2. make more parents eligible for the subsidy
3. cap increases in parent fees
4. simplify and monitor the program

It is anticipated that with these changes in place, more families will be able to access, and afford, child care.

Where do we want to be in the future?

The child care review recommends assessing these changes on an annual basis to track how well the subsidy program is working to support access to care; to ensure that the cap on fees, as well as the subsidy rates, increase; and that child care is more affordable for parents.

In order to evaluate whether the subsidy program is achieving its intended goals, this measure will be reviewed, with a revised measure included in the 2017-18 Business Plan.

Early Development Instrument (EDI)

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is a teacher-completed questionnaire that measures the development of children in five core areas, each of which are reliable predictors of adult health, education, and social outcomes. Schools, school boards, and community partners can use this data to identify vulnerable populations of children, and mobilize resources to support young children and their families where it is most needed.

What does this measure tell us?

The EDI provides teachers, school boards, and department staff with reliable information on five core domains: Physical Health and Well-Being, Social Competence, Emotional Maturity, Language and Cognitive Development, and Communication Skills and General Knowledge. The EDI questionnaire was first administered to grade primary students across the province in 2012–13, and again in 2014–15. It will be administered every second year across the province. The target for this performance measure is to reduce the percentage of children vulnerable in each of the EDI domains compared to the baseline.

EDI data allows educators to identify vulnerability rates by geographical area (e.g., provincial, regional, and neighbourhood/school). This information allows teachers, school boards, and the province to direct targeted support where it is most needed. Over time, children's developmental health and long-term outcomes will improve.

Reporting on 2015–16

The percentage of children vulnerable in the EDI domains for 2014-15 remains unchanged.

Percentage of Children Vulnerable in EDI Domain**						
Year	**% of Children Vulnerable**					
	Physical Health and Well-Being	Social Competence	Emotional Maturity	Language and Cognitive Development	Communication Skills & General Knowledge	**Vulnerable in at least one domain**
2012–13	10.3%	9.9%	9.7%	10.4%	10.7%	**25.5%**
2014–15	9.8%	9.1%	9.0%	10.8%	10.6%	**25.5%**

**A cut-point specific to Nova Scotia results has been used to re-calculate the EDI results to more accurately report on, and track, the province's EDI results. Therefore the 2012–13 percentages reported in this report will not correspond to the results reported in previous accountability reports.

It should be noted that the 2012–13 baseline percentages were originally calculated using the national cut-point[5], which is largely populated by children living in Ontario and British Columbia. A

[5] Cut-point is the value that marks the boundary for the lowest 10th percentile in the distribution. For 2012–13, cut-points specific to the Nova Scotia distribution were used to create a Nova Scotia baseline. Ongoing reporting of EDI results will use this method.

cut-point specific to Nova Scotia results has been used to re-calculate the EDI results to more accurately report on, and track, the province's EDI results. Therefore the 2012–13 percentages as noted in this report will not correspond to the results contained in the department's previous accountability reports.

Where do we want to go/be in the future?

Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education includes a strong focus on supporting preschool-aged children and their families to help ensure key developmental milestones are met, i.e., children are developmentally healthy. The department is committed to ensuring the right supports are in place to help every child successfully transition into school.

The *Action Plan* includes an initiative to register all children in an electronic school file at birth, with the information then used to track a child's growth and development as well as to help shape services and transition plans for starting school. There is also a commitment to arrange preschool developmental screenings for children at 18 and 36 months of age, and six months before starting school.

Additionally, there are many initiatives underway to support our youngest children. Each school board now has at least one Early Years Centre with the opening of four new centres in 2015-16. The Early Years Centre model provides a play-based early learning program for children in the year before entering school, as well as family supports and resources and regulated child care responsive to family needs.

The Department also released *Let's Play Together: A Guide for Parents of 4-Year Olds*, which is designed to help families support their children's early development through play; and it has increased the number of interventionists in the province to address the waitlist for Early Intervention programs.

High School Graduation Rate

One of the department's core business areas is grade primary to 12 education. The high school graduation rate is one of the measures for a desired outcome of better educated Nova Scotians.

What does this measure tell us?

The high school graduation rate is the percentage of students receiving a high school graduation diploma compared with the number of students that were in grade 9 three years earlier.

Education is a key variable in improved employment prospects and higher earnings. The successful pursuit of further education is strongly connected to high school graduation. This is the foundation upon which an individual's future success is built.

Reporting on 2015–16

The target for this measure is to increase the graduation rate over the 2009–10 baseline, by 2013–14. This target was achieved with the 2013–14 graduation rate at 3.7 per cent over the baseline. A new target was set to further increase the graduation rate by 2016–17.

Graduation rates are not available until after the conclusion of the school year in June.

High School Graduation Rate						
2009–10*	**2010–11**	**2011–12**	**2012–13**	**2013–14**	**2014–15**	**2015–16**
86.1%	88.7%	88.6%	89.6%	89.8%	92.5%	N/A

*baseline

Where do we want to go/be in the future?

Although the graduation rate is increasing, the department understands that there are students who still require support as they transition to post-secondary training or the workforce. *Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education* includes a number of initiatives that will provide students with more hands-on learning, opportunities to explore a range of career options, and will support their transition out of high school.

Actions implemented in 2015-16 include the expansion of Community-Based Learning programs (e.g., Co-op, Discovering Opportunities 9, Options and Opportunities, Skilled Trades), and an early introduction to coding which is included in the renewed P-3 curriculum. The creation of a Transition Task Force resulted in recommendations to support a successful transition from high school to post-secondary education and/or the workplace; a review of all existing high school and upgrading programs to remove barriers that may exist; and development of programming options that help youth transition (e.g., gap year program, transition-year program with transferrable credits, preparatory program for general arts and sciences).

Appendix 1—Disclosures of Wrongdoing received by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Department of Education – Disclosures of Wrongdoing	
Information Required under Section 18 of the Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act	**Fiscal Year 2015–16**
Number of disclosures received	0
Number of findings of wrongdoing	N/A
Details of each wrongdoing (insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	N/A
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrong doing	N/A